FATHER JOHN

OF THE GREEK CHURCH

an appreciation

by Alexander Whyte

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Father John of the Greek church

FATHER JOHN OF THE GREEK CHURCH

To rev'rend athletes pour a rev'rend song.

. . . every hour
I read you kills a sin,
Or lets a virtue in
To fight against it; and the Holy Ghost
Supports my frailties, lest my life be lost.

FATHER JOHN

OF THE GREEK CHURCH

an Appreciation

with some characteristic passages of his Mystical and Spiritual Autobiography collected and arranged by

Alexander Whyte
D.D.

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APPRECIATION AND INTRODUCTION

APPRECIATION AND INTRODUCTION

'They shall come from the east and the west.'—Our Lord.

Father John, as he is affectionately called, is the great living pillar, and the far-shining ornament of the Greek Church of our day. And the Greek Church is the most ancient and the most venerable of all the Churches of Christendom. The Greek Church stretches away back in a direct and an unbroken line to the days of our Lord and His apostles. The New Testament from Matthew to Revelation was all written in Greek. And the Old Testament itself has now for more than two thousand years been far more widely read in its Septuagint Greek than even in its original Hebrew. The great Ecumenical Councils also all sat in Greek cities, and carried on their great debates in the Greek tongue. In no other tongue, indeed, could they have carried on their

great debates; and in no other tongue could their great Creeds have been composed and handed down to us. The Greek tongue is by far the most powerful as well as the most exquisite intellectual instrument that has ever been perfected by the genius of man. And the finest use to which that fine tongue has ever been put has been the composition of the New Testament and the construction of the great Creeds of the Greek Church. To this day, when our Scottish children commit to memory their Shorter Catechism, they are already having their opening minds exercised in those deep distinctions and in those exact definitions that could only have been extricated and expressed in the Greek language. When they are taught to say, 'These three are one God'; when they are taught to say, 'The same in substance, equal in power and glory'; when they are taught to say, 'A true body and a reasonable soul'; when they are taught to say, 'In two distinct natures, and one person for ever,' our young people are already symbolising with Athanasius, and with Nazianzen, and with Cyril. They are being led back through their

own Westminster to Nice, and to Constantinople, and to Ephesus, and to Chalcedon. The Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms are a splendid education in Theology, and especially in Christology; in Church History, also, as well as in deep and clear thinking, and in correct and exact expression. Let those noblest of all Church Catechisms always be taught with all due learning, and intellect, and reverence, and love.

The great and still lasting schism between the Greek and Latin Churches was the result of many causes and the outcome of many occasions. Racial, linguistical, and geographical causes and occasions entered into that great schism: doctrinal and ecclesiastical causes and occasions entered into it: but most of all, religious and moral causes and occasions. The conversion of Constantine entered into it. The transfer of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople entered into it. The Filioque and other doctrinal and disciplinary controversies entered into it. The production and universal use of the Vulgate in the West entered into it. But most of all, and most

disastrous of all, the bad passions both of the East and the West entered into it. Ambition, and envy, and jealousy, and suspicion, and prejudice, and fear, and ill-will all entered into it and exasperated it, and all these things have embittered and perpetuated the great schism down to this day. The fall of Constantinople before the conquering Turks led to the elevation of Moscow to its present pre-eminence over against Rome. What Jerusalem had been to the Jews: what Athens had been to the ancient Greeks: what Rome then was and still is to the Latins — all that Moscow at that epoch became and still abides to the Greek Church and to the immense empire of Russia. It was to the preaching of St. Andrew that the Russian people owed their first introduction to the Gospel. At the same time, ten centuries had to pass before the grain of mustard-seed that St. Andrew sowed so early had grown to be a tree great enough to cover that immense land. But at last, and as by a miracle, Russia was born to God in a day. And thus it was that in the year 1325 Moscow became what that famous city has ever since remained, the

sacred seat of the Greek Church in Russia, and the proud and disdainful rival of Rome.

Every Church of Christendom, like every race of mankind, has its own special genius and distinct character. Unto the Jews became I as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. So am I made all things to all men, that I might by all means gain some. The Gospel spirit runs itself into all the moulds of men and of nations. It submits itself, and resigns itself, and adapts itself to all manner of circumstances. Grant the Gospel spirit but love and prayer to live upon, and it will become anything you like to please you. And even in the supreme matters of love and prayer it pleases not itself but you, and your traditions, and your superstitions, and your prejudices to your edification. If you are a Greek, the Gospel will become Greek to save you. If you are a Latin, it will become Latin. If you are an Englishman, it will become English. If you are a Russian, it will become and will remain Russian.

And, accordingly, the Greek Church in Russia, like Russia among the nations, is the most conservative, stationary, and that to stagnation almost, of all the Churches in Christendom. The massiveness, the immobility, the inelasticity of the Greek Church in Russia is a proverb among all her sister Churches. No innovation has ever invaded the Russian Church. No development, either in doctrine or in discipline, has ever disturbed the venerable and vast calm of The Holy Orthodox Church. She is the true home of use and wont; she is the true harbour and house of refuge for all those who are determined neither to go forward nor to go backward, but always to stand still. 'The straws of custom,' says Stanley, 'show which way the spirit of an institution blows. The primitive posture of standing in prayer still retains its ground in the East; whilst in the West it is only preserved in the extreme Protestant communities by way of antagonism to Rome. Organs and all musical instruments are as odious to a Greek or a Russian churchman as they are to a Scottish Presbyterian. Even the schism that convulsed the Russian

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Church almost at the same time that Latin Christendom was rent by the German Reformation, was not a forward but a retrograde movement, a protest not against abuses, but against innovations.' The Russian Church is The One, Apostolic, Holy, Orthodox, Catholic Church, and all outside of her communion and obedience are schismatics and heretics. We are accustomed in the West and North to insolent enough assumptions, and to lofty enough pretensions; but the East looks down on us all alike. We are all so many rank dissenters and turbulent non-conformists to her. Rome and Geneva, Canterbury and Edinburgh, are all in the same condemnation to her. The Pope is the oldest of her prodigal sons, and General Booth is the youngest; only the Pope is by far the worse, in her eyes, of the two. The first Pope, in her eyes, was the first Protestant. He was the real and original father of all liberalism in politics and all rationalism in philosophy and in theology. In the words of Canonist Theodore Balsamon,—'We excommunicate the Pope for all his errors: and with him, all the West who heretically adhere to him.

All the Westerns, therefore, are to be treated simply as so many schismatics, and an anathema must be provided for their abjuration.' And that anathema is provided and pronounced to satiety surely in every Greek Church on every first Sunday in Lent: and that Sunday is sanctified by the name of Orthodox Sunday. On that orthodox and denunciatory day some sixty anathemas are hurled at all heretics and schismatics from Arius of Alexandria down to our own day. Anathema! Anathema! Anathema! But on the other hand, for all the orthodox Greek Emperors,—Everlasting remembrance! Everlasting remembrance! Everlasting remembrance! Till I had gone to the originals for myself I was wont to think that the Commination Services of Orthodox Sunday must be something altogether savage and wholly insufferable to the mind of Christ. But I was greatly disappointed when I felt myself forced to surrender all my indignation and contempt at the Greek Church on account of Orthodox Sunday, and to admit that, with many imperfections from my point of view, and with many things that, if I were their ecclesiastical and

devotional censor, I would strike out,—yet, with all that, there is a great deal on Orthodox Sunday that is not only as true as the word of God, but is also both tender and charitable, stately and noble, sweet and beautiful. Let us give the Greek Church, even on Orthodox Sunday, her full and even liberal due. Bless them that curse you.

It was his far-travelling missionary experience that transformed Saul of Tarsus into such a shining pattern of that divine charity concerning which he sings such an immortal song in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. As the great apostle passed on from land to land, and from one race of his fellowmen to another, he came to see that he must consult with them, and advise with them, and learn from them, and respect them, and love them, and generously acknowledge to them, and appropriate from them, all their native truth and goodness, if he was ever to hope to win them to the full mind of Jesus Christ. And all that, the greatest of the apostles more and more did, as his life went on, till he ended by standing, shall we say, next to his Master Himself both in wisdom

and in love. But our own Scottish Church, even in her darkest days, was never more dead to her Lord's command to preach the Gospel to every creature than the Russian Church has all along been, and still is. And the stationary, stiff, and almost stone-dead state of the Russian Church, in some respects, is not the outcome of the somewhat stony Russian character only; it is full as much the accumulated result of so many centuries of a selfish and an indolent neglect of one of her first duties to her Lord and to the world. Had the great national Church of the Russian Empire but devised liberal things; had she been what so many small and poor Churches have been both in Scotland and in England and on the Continent and in America; had she, with all her riches, been a generous-hearted, self-denying, world-evangelising Church—who can tell how all that might by this time have been paid back to her in spiritual life, as well as in ecclesiastical, and political, and individual liberty? Her Latin sister, with all her faults, did the noblest service to her Master and to the world in the evangelisation of England and Germany in the

middle ages. And even when she was nearest to death in Europe, her missions to America and China and India all proved that there was still a living heart left somewhere in her for Jesus Christ and for the spread of His Gospel. And since the Reformation, and notably in our own day, the missionary work of the Evangelical Communions is the brightest page of this whole world's history since the days of the apostles. The Church of Russia alone stands all the day idle, while all her sisters are hard at work in their Master's vineyard. All that Stanley himself can say for her in this respect is this: 'If the Russian Church is not a missionary Church: then, neither is she a persecuting Church.'

'Notwithstanding all that,' says Mr. Durban, in a fine paper in the third number of *The New Orthodoxy*, 'it must be manifest to every open mind that we have here no decadent or emasculated spiritual institution. A religion which has vivified and resuscitated nations: which throbs in the heart of one of the mightiest and most rapidly advancing of modern empires; which commands the spiritual

allegiance and gains the impassioned loyalty of the manhood of the Russian Empire, as no other Church does in any other land, is surely entitled to careful study by all those who feel interested in the comparative theology of the age,'—and, I will add, by all those who feel interested in far better and far deeper things than that.

Truly and intensely interesting as the subject is, and closely as it touches on the main theme of this discourse, at the same time, I cannot attempt to enter on a discussion of the great Office-books of The Holy Eastern Church; nor can I enter on the Public Worship of which those rich and elaborate books constitute almost the whole service. Even Neale himself acknowledges that he found the investigation of the liturgies and the euchologies of the Greek Church a task of the very greatest difficulty. 'The variety, the bulk, and the intricacy of the Office-books themselves; the number and the obscurity of the rubrics; the unwritten tradition that guides and adjusts all, and the knowledge of which is scarcely to be gained but by oral teaching; the abbrevia-

tions of diction; the extraordinary contractions of words; the technicalities in the quotation of Psalms or Versicles; the shifting backwards and forwards from book to book; and the absence of any one general rule for the concurrence of festivals; these things form only one of the many sources of our difficulty' in dealing with the great unconsolidated and unharmonised Breviary of the Greek Church. But while it is absolutely impossible to reduce that enormous subject into such a space as can here be commanded, there is one of their books of Public and Private Devotion that well deserves to be acknowledged in passing. The Slavonic Service-book, entitled *Trébnik*, or *The Book of Needs*, is an extraordinarily rich and beautiful compilation provided by the Greek Church for the use both of her priests and her people. The book gets its so expressive name from its peculiar contents. This golden little book is a *vade-mecum*, so to call it, which the Greek Church puts into the hands of all her priests and people to guide them in all the parts and processes, exigencies and emergencies, of their spiritual and devotional life from their cradle

to their grave. And, only take Mary out of it, and some other Greek intrusions; only edit it up to our Protestant and Evangelical truth and taste, and it might quite well become a cherished possession for all our own household and personal needs also. And to those who can pass the mother of our Lord by with all the reverence and love that are due to her, and who do not indulge themselves over this and that stumbling-stone for our Western and Northern feet; to those who are determined to take no offence, but to seek their own spiritual profit only, *The Book of Needs* is a noble book, and a praise and an honour to the Church that has provided it for her pilgrim people. The whole book is of singular dignity, and, indeed, majesty; but out of it all The Order for the Burial of a Priest stands forth as a service of the greatest stateliness and nobleness and impressiveness to the heart and the imagination of one Presbyterian minister at any rate. The present speaker is bound to say that he has found it a great education, and a great reward, to study both King, and Neale, and Palmer, and Blackmore, and Brightman, and Shann, on *The Book*

of Needs, and on all the other liturgies and euchologies to which those learned men have happily given him such intellectual and devotional access. But, perhaps, the very finest thing; the thing, at any rate, that I most enjoy in all the Office-books of the Greek Church, is The Great Canon composed by St. Andrew of Crete. This devotional composition is called 'The Princely Canon,' and it well deserves its exalted name. This so elaborate and so impressive devotion begins at the very beginning, and it takes the penitent through the whole of Holy Scripture, putting him into the penitential position and into the spiritual case of all the successive sinners whose sins are discovered, confessed, and forgiven in the Word of God. The intending communicant comes down through all the recorded transgressions of faith and obedience in the Word of God, and at the name of each fallen forerunner of his he stops and says, 'I am the man!' And at the name of each saint, also, in the Old Testament and the New, he covers his face and says, 'Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' 'The Princely Canon' is a splendid

testimony to the depth of heart and to the spirituality of mind of its revered composer. This truly princely canon is sung with great appropriateness on the Thursday of every returning Passion Week.

But, all canons and euchologies of men apart —what about the open Bible? you will ask. Beneath and behind all her other likenesses to us and unlikenesses: apart from all other agreements and disagreements,—what about the word of God? Are the Holy Scriptures open to the Russian people, as they have been open to us ever since the Reformation? Or, does the Greek Church interdict, or at best suspect and grudge, the open Bible to her people like the Latin Church? Well, I am able to answer your solicitude in that matter in a way that will rejoice the hearts of all those who make that inquiry in the hope and prayer to receive a good answer. I put that whole question, with some anxiety, to my friend, the Prince Galitzin, who is both a loyal member of the Greek Church in Russia, and who at the same time knows intimately our best religious life in the West, both Roman and Reformed; and who

has, in addition, the fullest sympathy with those who give the Bible its supreme and unapproached place, both in public worship and in private devotion. The Prince's memorandum to me, after some passages on the old Slavonic language as the official language of the Russian Church, proceeds thus: 'The reading of the Scriptures occupies so large and so important a place in the liturgy of our Church, that every member who attends the services regularly is sure to hear the whole of the Scriptures read to him in a short space of time. It is true that the Holy Scriptures were very superficially known in Russia up to the commencement of the present century; but that was due partly to the great cost of the copies—partly to the defective manner of the reading of the Scriptures in public worship. But at the beginning of this century, under the reign of Alexander I., Prince Galitzin, the minister of ecclesiastical affairs, gave a great impulse to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures. Seconded by some members of the Society of Friends, and by German pietists and mystics, the Prince founded the Bible-work in Russia, and built

it up in the teeth of all opposition. A great impulse to the spread of the Scriptures at that time was given by the publication of a magnificent translation of the New Testament into modern Russian from the pen of Bishop Philarète Drozdoff. The Holy Synod also, the head and arm of the Russian Church, took the matter up, and did the greatest possible service to the Kingdom of God in Russia by placing the Bible within the reach of the poorest purse. For sixpence a well-printed and well-bound copy of the New Testament is now to be purchased everywhere in Russia. As to the diffusion of the Scriptures, that has been taken up most successfully by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and by a Russian Society for the spread of the Gospel. Both Societies have their agents and colporteurs who are general favourites and are universally respected. The great convents, also, are often most important centres for the circulation of the Scriptures. As for the colporteurs, they show a zeal and a courage that remind one of the enthusiasm of the Salvation Army. They may be met with everywhere urging people to

become possessors of the pearl of great price. It is a rare thing to find a steamer or a train in which there is not one of those devoted men pressing the Word of God upon the passengers. The Bible Societies are not content with selling the Scriptures at a cheap price, they distribute the Holy Book gratis where the people are too poor to buy it. For instance, at St. Petersburg a special agent is commissioned to distribute copies of the Scriptures to convicts and colonists on their way to Siberia. Thanks to the Russian Bible Society, every posting-inn is provided with a New Testament on the public table. It lies also in all the rooms of the best hotels. The first book that the Russian peasant buys is the Bible. It is the first book that he reads and reasons about. And may God bless the good seed that thus falls on those simple hearts!'

Such then, in much too short, is the Greek Church in Russia in which John Sergieff was born and brought up, and in which he is now an arch-priest and a main pillar. I have instinctively and intentionally dwelt on the things

of good report in that Mother Church, rather than on those of evil report. And who shall be offended with me for that? What kind of an unnatural son would he be who would not dwell on whatsoever things are venerable, and noble, and steadfast, and prayerful, and hopeful, in that apostolic Church out of whose roots his own Church sprang, and in whose ministry such a saint as Father John is now serving God? 'I am the son of a Sacristan of the province of Archangel, and I was born in the year 1829. From my earliest years my parents instructed me in prayer, and by their own personal example made me a religiously inclined boy. They took me regularly to church, and I loved the public worship with my whole soul, especially good singing. I passed into the parish school in the tenth year of my age: but I made little or no progress for a long time. I seemed to have no mind. I could not learn, though, all the time, I was a well-conditioned lad. Being so much put out by my want of success in my lessons, I prayed to God passionately that He would give me more mind and more ability to learn my lessons.

And all at once there came to me a marvellous clearing-up of my intellect, till I began to understand my lessons very well. And the older I grew the better I succeeded with my studies, till I was almost the dux of the whole school. And then in 1851 I was sent to the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg to be educated for the Church at the cost of the State. I secured the post of clerk to the Academy, and I was able, out of my small salary of a pound a month, to send some help home to my widowed mother. Finishing my Divinity course in 1855, I passed on as priest to Cronstadt, and in December of that year I married the daughter of the senior priest of the place, by name Elizabeth.' (I here take in this from Stanley's first lecture on the Eastern Church. 'However fervent the Oriental Church has been at all times in its assertion of the ascetic and monastic system, yet among her ministers marriage is not only permitted and frequent, but in some orders of the ministry is absolutely compulsory. It is a startling sight to the traveller, after long wanderings in the south of Europe, to find himself among the moun-

tains of Greece, and in Asia Minor, once more under the roof of a married pastor, and to see the table of the parish priest furnished, as it might be in Protestant England or Switzerland, by the hands of an acknowledged wife.') 'Of children,' Father John goes on, 'we have none, nor ever had any. In the very first days of my ministry, I made it a rule for myself to attend with the utmost possible earnestness to my work as a preacher and a pastor. I strictly examined myself as to my inner life. With this intent I took to the closest study of the Holy Scriptures; selecting from them what most concerned myself as a man, as a minister, and as a member of society. I commenced early to keep a diary, in which I set down my inward struggles with myself, and all my secret prayers to God, and all my gratitude for my deliverances from temptations, and afflictions, and all disasters. Besides preaching, from the very beginning of my ministry I tried to take the utmost care of the poor: the more so that I was one of them myself.' 'On the seaboard of the town of Cronstadt,' so a popular life of Father John

runs, 'half a verst from the Cathedral of St. Andrew, stands a small grey house hidden from the view of the passers by a high boarded-up fence and a thick hedge. In this cottage lives the revered of all Russia, Father John Sergieff. The furnishing of his house consists of a bed with a hard mattress, a common table, a few chairs, and two or three presses,—this is all the furnishing and adorning of the house of the Cronstadt minister who distributes annually hundreds of thousands of roubles for help and alms to the poor. In the summer, even before the sun is up, and in winter, while it is yet long dark, Father John awakens alert, and serious, and self-entranced; and, after his ablutions, stands before his own icon and offers up his morning prayer. He altogether enters into his prayer; he passes into another world, and for the time forgets this earth. For about half an hour he continues in prayer, out of which he comes forth with the iron energy he has there put on, and with the fortitude of soul and body that carries him through another day, and with his eyes sparkling with an extraordinary light and love. Father John

now departs to morning service in the church. But this is not so easy; the gate of his house is already surrounded by a crowd of people, all but impervious, both of pilgrims from all parts of Russia, and of people from all around, seeking for his benediction, or just to see him. Advising, blessing, reproving, pushing aside, he sits down in his drosky. Although it is only half a verst to the church, Father John always drives, because, otherwise, he would not reach the church till the day was gone. At last the priest is at the altar, and the hour is six. He reads the Evangel, prays, and takes part in the praise. Deep, distinct, precise, and with a special reverence, his fine strong voice sounds out through the church, Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, and the crowd of people fall on their knees. The service finished, Father John will have twelve or fifteen visits to pay to sick and sorrowful people in Cronstadt; several lessons to give to the catechumens and others; a visit to St. Petersburg; some tens of visitors waiting him at home; and hundreds of letters to open and answer. And great part of these

are "requests for prayer" from far and near: sometimes even from Germany; sometimes even from England and Ireland. And so on to-morrow, and the day after, year after year.' And in all that, as a fellow-churchman of Father John has said to me about him, 'everything that marvellous man touches he turns to gold: from the dispensation of the Lord's Supper down to teaching an infant class in the Sabbath school.' 'Father John,' writes the St. Petersburg correspondent of *The Times*, 'is known and revered in every nook and corner of Russia. This wonderful man, in the midst of his Russian surroundings, seems to approach in these days to the first apostles. He is indeed a true physician of the Gospel. His extraordinary healing powers, and the spiritual and bodily cures effected by the reception of his earnest consolations, are attested on all sides by many sorts and conditions of men. To those who believe in Father John, and their name is legion, the age of miracles is not yet over. Crowds press round him whenever he leaves his humble abode, and they are happy if they can only touch

the hem of his modest garment. Father John's life is one of uninterrupted self-sacrificing charity and Christian ministration among the poor, the sick, and the needy. Not, however, refusing his presence and prayers to the well-to-do and the rich, who send for him when other help fails, and never in vain, from all parts of the country. Steamboats and trains in which he travels to and fro are besieged with such crowds that the police have to protect him from their pressure. The report of his appearance in any house in St. Petersburg makes the news spread like wild-fire, brings throngs of poor people, running madly from all the adjoining streets, to get within the range of his healing presence, to receive his blessing, or to implore his attendance at the sick-beds of relatives and friends.' To this it may be added that the last Czar received the cup of blessing from the hands of Father John on his death-bed, and all but died in his arms. 'My people love you,' said the Emperor with his dying breath. 'Yes, they love you, because they know what you are. And I feel

better when you hold your hands over me in prayer.'

Our own Archbishop Maclagan made a visit to the Russian Church in April of last year, and I take the following from an excellent account of the Archbishop's visit which appeared in *The Guardian* of May 26th :—

'But one more episode of the Archbishop's visit to St. Petersburg remains to be chronicled—namely, a visit paid him by the well-known priest, Father John of Cronstadt, the reputation of whose saintly life and extraordinary influence for good in all parts of Russia has already reached this country, where his book, *My Life in Christ*, has lately been published in an excellent translation by M. Goulaeff, preceded by a letter of dedication to our gracious Sovereign. On returning from a visit to the Hermitage picture-gallery, we found a telegram saying that Father John would call in the course of the afternoon, and it was evident by the groups of hotel servants already waiting about in the passages near our rooms that the news of his intended visit was already more or less public property. At last we heard a sort of rush in the passage, and one of the servants hurriedly looked into our sitting-room and told us that Father John had come. I went out into the passage and met the venerable priest, his face as usual calm, and lit with smiles as he made his way with difficulty through the crowds of hotel servants who were pressing round

him in order to kiss his hand or to receive his blessing. His influence in Russia extends far beyond the Orthodox population, and I noticed that not only several of the German Lutheran servants in the hotel were pressing round him, but that even two of the Mohammedan Tartar waiters from the restaurant were seeking and receiving his blessing. Father John stayed with us for more than an hour, and he and the Archbishop carried on an interesting and remarkable conversation on the subject of the religious condition of the poor in England and Russia respectively, and more especially in the great towns, where each of them has had such a wide experience. His departure was attended in the passage by a similar demonstration to that which had taken place on his arrival, and it was with great difficulty that he made his way to the lift, only to meet with a still denser crowd in the street as he made his way from the hotel to his carriage.'

But, with all that, Father John's biography, and, especially, his autobiography, has yet to be written. Even his diary, which he has been writing every day all his life, is not a proper diary at all. In his own strong and modest words about it, his diary is only so many moments of spiritual contemplation, reverent feeling, earnest self-amendment, and peace with God, and especially of prayer, all set down at

the moment, and the true value of which each several reader of what he has written is left to judge for himself. Now that is just what I have done. I have read Father John's diary over and over and over again; and, along with it, all else of Father John's writing that I could lay my hands on; as also all I could collect of other men's writings from every quarter concerning him. And, judging him and his work for myself, and judging both him and it very highly, and both loving and honouring him in the Lord, I have been led to introduce him to my Classes as, to my mind, the greatest of living spiritual writers and a true scriptural mystic; altogether worthy to stand before us in our studies beside Behmen, and Teresa, and A'Kempis, and Rutherford, and Shepard, and Law, and all such-like devotional, experimental, and spiritual authors.

While the whole of Father John's auto-biographic diary is digested immediately out of his own deepest experience, there is, at the same time, a long catena of special experimental passages that runs all through the book, binding it all together with the cords of a spiritual

man of the first order of such men. I have an index of all those passages before me, all of which are written in tears and in blood, in truth and in power and in prayer, above all the rest of this everywhere truthful and powerful and prayerful book. And, then, those outstanding passages are all indorsed, as they did not need to be, with this seal and countersign, 'This is experience; this is my own experience; this is my own daily experience.' And this continual stamp and seal comes in suddenly, and with extraordinary impressiveness, when he is warning and rebuking us, and, again, when he is counselling and comforting us in some extraordinary inward and soul-searching way,—'This is experience; this is my daily experience' comes in,—I cannot hope to convey to you with what power and authority this seal and stamp comes in. When he is warning us, as he often warns us, against the dark and cruel and malignant passions of our own hearts; when he is imploring us to pray with our whole hearts; when he is encouraging and emboldening us to rise up and repudiate the thoughts and the feelings that the devil insinuates into our hearts;

when he is giving us his best pastoral advice as to how we are still to sit at the Lord's Table amid all fears and fightings of conscience and heart; when he is back again with us at the intensest and most penitent prayer; when he is assuring us, as if on his oath, that God will always hear us on the spot when our whole hearts cry for His mercy; when on the same page he tells us how, on such and such a date, he called upon God in all the sinfulness of his heart, and, as soon as he had finished his prayer, peace and liberty established themselves within him; and when, after all that, his deceitful heart would not return to God in abiding prayer, such an abomination of sin and unbelief had it become; when he is the most plain-spoken of all preachers about the evils of eating and drinking; when he is pressing intercessory prayer on us, and the sure and immediate recompense of intercessory prayer to ourselves; and so on through his whole book; it comes in, I cannot tell you with what surprise and rapture of the heart,—'This is true!' 'This is of experience!' 'This is my own daily experience!' The absolute integrity and

the intense earnestness of the man; his uttermost self-forgetfulness, and most of all when he is speaking most authoritatively to us about himself; his sweet and fascinating humility; his hold of God; his hold of himself; his sure-footedness in the Word of God and in the heart of man; all this—and his whole volume full of the same kind—makes John Sergieff to be a spiritual authority and a spiritual guide of the very first order; and proclaims him a mystical saint second, in some of those respects, to none of that noble family of the children of God.

Those great experience-passages are the source and the measure of the whole book. But for those great passages the rest of the book had never been written. And when they are once given, all the rest of the book is already given. And, especially, those deep parts of the book that deal with the Divine Nature; and with the Divine Nature in its Oneness, Simplicity, Incomplexity, Uncompoundedness, Omnipresence, and Inwardness. Our spiritual experience of ourselves is the exact limit and the sure measure of our spiritual experience of God. Our spiritual discovery, and hold, and

possession of ourselves exactly measure our discovery, and hold, and possession, and enjoyment of God. They are one and the same thing. And thus it is that our author continually insists on the oneness, the simplicity, the incomplexity, and the spirituality of our souls in the very same sense, and in the very same terms, in which he insists on the Oneness, the Simplicity, and the Spirituality of the Divine Nature. God is a Spirit, He is continually instructing and reminding us. A Simple, Incomplex Being. The Being, indeed, of all beings. The Almighty God is wholly present in everything that exists. He penetrates and fills everything full, according to its nature and its capacity. Everything that anywhere exists has its origin, its existence, its life, its preservation, and its well-being in God. He is infinite, eternal, unchangeable. Neither time nor space exists for Him. He creates and He sustains time and space only as an environment for His creatures. The whole mode and manner of the Divine existence is too deep for us. We cannot wade out into it. Who can imagine what it is to be everywhere, and totally,

and wholly, everywhere? It is too high; we cannot attain to it. At the same time, all that is as old as Moses and David and Isaiah. Not Behmen, not Pascal, not Edwards, not Sergieff, with all the revelations of God, and with all the experiences of God's saints behind and within them, has gone deeper into God than David has already done in the 139th Psalm. *The City of God*, also, has it all in those well-known words: 'God is that Incorporeal Nature which is not contained in any place, but is all in every place.' It is but the epigram of another Latin Father: 'Deus ubique est; et totus ubique est.' And of yet another: 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere.' Only, the originality and the genius and the grace of Father John stand out in this, that he dwells on that, and returns continually to that, and carries back his readers to that, and all in the most sudden, startling, awakening, ennobling, and sanctifying way. Our God is wholly and totally everywhere; and therefore He is with you and with me in all His Godhead, and power, and truth, and goodness. And His equally Incomplex,

if Incarnate Son, is wholly with us also in all His pity, and sympathy, and blood, and resurrection, and righteousness, and intercession and mediatorial providence. Believe, Sergieff continually cries. Believe all that with all your mind and with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your imagination, and with all that is within you. Work at that. Labour at that. Never leave off from that. There is nothing else worth working at. For in God you live, and move, and have your being, and your well-being, and in nothing and in no one else. 'This also is experience.'

Though I am here in the near neighbourhood of the Greek icons, I am not going to enter on that stumbling subject. It would not be for your universal edification. But if there is any divinity student here who is strongly drawn to a deep and comprehensive study of the devotional life; and of the manners and the methods, the aids and the appliances of that life, true and false, right and wrong, in all the Churches; let him read and digest all that Father John has to say to him on that subject. And then let him buy for a shilling Ralph

Erskine's *Faith no Fancy: A Treatise of Mental Images discovering both vain Philosophy and vile Divinity*. Between the Greek Mystic and the Scottish Calvinist, the tyros to whom Erskine dedicates his learned and able treatise will get both an opened and a deepened mind for all their days. All that can possibly be said for icons as an imaginative aid to faith is said in the most beautiful and winning way by Father John. And, then, all of that kind is put under the severest tests of philosophy and theology and Holy Scripture by our own Ralph Erskine in his most masterly and conclusive manner.

The great mystic's great chapter on faith and prayer springs immediately, and with immense impressiveness and fruitfulness, out of all that. 'This also is experience.' If God is indeed and in truth all that, then how easy it is for Him to give us all things we need when we take His ordained way of faith and prayer to receive them! It is utterly unpardonable, it is absolutely suicidal in us if we still doubt, and halt, and come away from God with our hearts empty. Our Lord said it as plainly as even He could say it. Every one that asketh receiveth,

and he that seeketh findeth. Believe that you receive it, He said also, and you shall have it. Not to believe, then, is blasphemy against God. It is making Jesus Christ a lying witness. Only feel truly and sincerely your need of that for which you pray, and believe that it comes from God, and you will obtain anything and everything. For with God all things are possible. Whether you are sitting alone, or lying down, or walking abroad, or thinking, or writing, or working ; whether you are well or ill, at home or out, on land or on sea, be continually assured that God at that moment is wholly with you ; that He hears the finest breathings and beatings of your hearts ; and that He listens to hear and help you. Has He not said to you that He waits for you to be gracious to you? Do you deny that? No, demands Father John, you must not either forget or deny or despair of that. Forget, deny, despair of anything and everything but that. Remember that for Omnipotence nothing is difficult, nor for Love a trouble or a task. All things, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall surely receive.

He who doubts is severely punished for his doubt. For his heart is left of God hard, and cold, and dead in sin. On the other hand, all blessings; all life, and peace, and power, and joy; it all comes directly and immediately from God, and from God in reply to believing prayer. 'This also I have a thousand times proved to be truth in my own experience. My heart tells me so at this moment that I write. Thou, O my God, art an ever open treasure-house of all blessedness to me. Amen.'

I suppose it is all this: I can well believe that it has been fifty years of a life like this that has given this eminent man of faith and prayer such a name and such a power in the land where he dwells. You will say it is great ignorance and great superstition in the Russian people to run after any man as they run after Father John. And you will denounce it as great credulity in me, and great disloyalty to my Church at home, for me to admit that there is anything to be admired or imitated in any Russian archpriest. But I incline more and more, the longer I live, to be very easy of belief in the literal promises and strong assurances of

Jesus Christ, and in the boundless power of believing prayer. I am a miracle of importunate prayer myself, as great as anything in Father John, though I will never be bold enough to give day and date for it in this life as he so courageously and so eucharistically does. Try the prayer of faith, and the literal word of Christ yourself. You can lose nothing by it; and you may—nay, to a certainty you will, gain more by it than you can ask or think. 'This also is experience.'

But with all that, and much more that is equally precious and epoch-making for us in Father John's autobiographic diary; at the same time, that book, it must always be proclaimed, if only to propitiate people, is far from perfect. 'Everything has two handles,' says Epictetus; and Father John's autobiographic diary is no exception to that true rule. For if the diary has a rich handle for the teachable, and the hospitable, and the thankful, and the spiritual, it has also a protruding-enough handle for the ill-natured man, and the impossible man to please. There are too many motes, as I see quite well, in Father John's

Greek eye. There is far too much about the mother of our Lord, and about His saints, and about an extravagant and a superstitious faith in prayer, as well as about icons, and azymes, and such like. There are too many flies in the ointment, I frankly admit. And all that I contend for is only this, that the ointment, all the time, itself is good; is indeed of a peculiarly rich, and healing, and fragrant, and scarce kind. And, moreover, that the flies that have got into the box of spikenard can easily be separated out of it. At the same time, as another most true proverb has it,—one man's meat is another man's poison. And Father John has not written his book for all men; but only for those who are able and willing to profit by what he has written. He is bold to say as he hands us his great devotional and experimental gift, 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man.' 'This man,' says Palmer, 'is in error only incidentally, and by no real fault of his own, but only through his unhappy tradition, while we are in the truth by no virtue of our own, but only through our so much happier

tradition. And his zeal in communicating to us what he has experienced to be Divine truth is a personal merit and a praise to him. Whereas our want of a like experience, and of a will and a desire to profit by his, is a real vice and defect in ourselves.' Those golden words deserve to be printed at the head of every controversial page, and should be acknowledged and attributed to his honour everywhere as William Palmer's wise and irenical law.

If then that is so; if all Father John's faults and errors, so to call them, are only of tradition and inheritance, whereas his attainments and his experiences in the Divine life are all his own conquest and possession; shall we not both believe and hope that to whom so much has been given, and such a good use made of it, far more shall yet be given and gained? Shall we not hope and pray, and both in love and honour, that Father John may yet become such a reformer in Russia, as powerful and as lasting, as Knox was in Scotland, and Wesley in England? Nicon had the making of a great reformer in him, and Lucar was the sympathetic correspondent and guest of Abbot and Diodati, and

others of the great Western reformers and theologians of his day. But the time was not ripe. Russia was not ready. To Lucar especially our hearts and imaginations continually return. Had not the bowstring of the Sultan cut short that truly apostolic life, there is no limit to the service that Lucar might have done for the Eastern Church of his day. And all the past history of that truly venerable but far too fossilised Church; her present position as the National Church of Russia; the growing power of Russia also among the nations of the earth; and then the rise of such a man as Father John at the very heart of that Church, will all make us wait and watch to see if he is to be made of God that great reformer and that great evangelist which she so much needs. With his prodigious popularity and influence with the common people; with his privileged access to the very highest circles and personages in the Empire; with his so conspicuous loyalty and devotion to his own Church and nation; and with his so essentially evangelical, and so profoundly spiritual teaching and character,—is Father

John predestinated to effect the internal reformation and the spiritual quickening of the Church and the people he loves so well? Dean Stanley closes his brilliant lectures on the Eastern Church with a fine page full of such prophetical and wistful questions as these. What will her future be? Will the Greek Church venture, still retaining her elaborate forms of ritual, to use them all as so many vehicles of true spiritual and moral edification for her people? Will she be able to cleanse away the corruption and vice of the higher ranks in Russia, as well as the deceit and rude intemperance of the middle and lower classes? The Russian clergy, as they recite the Nicene Creed at the Lord's Table, always embrace one another with a fraternal kiss, in order to remind themselves and the congregation that the Orthodox Faith is never to be disjoined from apostolical charity. Is there a hope that this noble thought may be more adequately represented in their ecclesiastical development than it has been in our own? Will Russia yet exhibit to the whole world the sight of a Church and a people understanding, receiving,

fostering the progress of new ideas, foreign learning, and free inquiry, not as the destruction, but as the fulfilment of religious belief and devotion? Will the Churches of the West find that, in the greatest National Church now existing on the face of the earth, there is still a principle of life at work, which is at once more steadfast, more liberal, and more pacific, than has hitherto been produced, either by the uniformity of Rome, or the variation of Protestantism? Such are some of Stanley's characteristic questions as he closes his classical book. Now, it is no more than the simple truth to say that these very questions, and many others more or less kindred to them, rose in my own mind continually as I read and pondered the life, and the experience, and the teaching, and the immense influence of John Sergieff. Jonathan Edwards read the newsletters of his day in order to see how the kingdom of God was coming all over the earth, and how the will of God was being done on earth as in heaven. Mr. Dobson, the Correspondent of *The Times* in St. Petersburg, first introduced Father John to the English people

in a noble letter to that journal in 1891. And may we not hope one day to read in all our journals, that both by Father John's books, and by his preaching, and by his character, and above all by his prayers, the great Greek Church in Russia has again become all that she was in her Apostolic days, when as yet she looked forth on the world as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

SELECTED PASSAGES

*** *The following passages are selected and arranged from 'My Life in Christ,' published in this country by Cassell and Company.*

See at end of this Volume.

SELECTED PASSAGES

FATHER JOHN ON HIMSELF

(1) *On his pursuit of Truth.*—Thou hast opened to me all the riches of faith, and of nature, and of the human mind. I have studied the laws that regulate the mind of man in its pursuit of truth, and the growth and the beauty of the languages of men. I have penetrated with some depth into the mysteries of Nature, into her laws, into the abyss of the creation of the worlds, and into their evolution and development. I know something of the wonderful history of our own earth also. I have acquainted myself with its different peoples; with its celebrated men, and with their great achievements. I have spent no little time and strength in the study of myself also, and of Thee, and of the way I must take to know Thee and to come to Thee. And I hope still to learn much more of all

that in the years to come. But, with all that, neither my mind nor my heart is satisfied : no, nor ever will be. My mind still hungers ; my heart still hungers and thirsts, and cries, Give, give. When and how shall I ever be satisfied? I shall be satisfied only when I awake with Thy likeness, and when the Lamb leads me to living fountains of waters. For He says to me, and I believe Him : The water that I shall give you shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

(2) *On his own Heart.*—Do not give way to the dark feelings in your heart against your neighbour. For many dark and malignant feelings arise on occasion out of the bottomless depths of your heart. And he who has not learned how to subdue and expel these evil emanations will often become gloomy, and irascible, and melancholy, and bitter, and a great burden to himself and to others. When these abominable ebullitions are vomited up within you, force yourself to love and goodwill, to mirth even, and innocence. Do good and speak good concerning your neighbour, and your

wicked heart will be shut down, and all your evil feelings will scatter like smoke. This is from my own experience.

When malice against any one is roused in your heart, then believe, and say, and insist that it is the devil at work within you. Hate with horror the diabolical outcome of your own heart. Repudiate it. Deny it. Do not acknowledge it. Speak as Paul spake about it in The Epistle to the Romans. Say, it is not I that do it. This also is from experience.

I often oppose God and His holy laws. I am often unbelieving, selfish, proud. I often despise others, I often envy others. I am often avaricious, covetous, sensual, ambitious, impatient, irritable, slothful. I do not pity those who suffer. This, and much more like it, is my daily experience.

All my happiness and unhappiness is contained in the thoughts and affections and inclinations of my heart. If all these things are in accord with the will of God, then I am at rest. Then I am filled with Divine light, and joy, and blessedness. If not, I am uneasy, filled with soul-destroying darkness, heaviness,

despondency. But as soon as I change the evil thoughts and affections of my heart into good affections; into affections like God and well-pleasing to Him, then I immediately return to rest and blessedness.

(3) *On his experiences in Prayer.*—Fervent, tearful prayer not only delivers the heart from sin, but it also cures bodily maladies and infirmities. It renews the whole being of a man, and makes him, so to say, born again, and a new creature. I speak from experience. What a priceless gift is prayer! Glory to Thee, The Only-begotten Son of God, who hath obtained for us the endless pardon of all our sins, and all kinds of access to the throne of grace!

As He hears every word of the prayer, 'God have mercy on me!' and fulfils every word of it: so, likewise, God hears and fulfils all the words of all our other prayers—the most personal, and particular, and peculiar, and secret; only ask in all the simplicity of your heart, nothing doubting. This is from experience.

I thank Thee, my Lord and Master, for teaching me how to pray simply and sincerely to Thee, and for hearing me when I so called upon Thee, and for saving me from all my sins and sorrows, and for afterwards directing all my ways. I called upon Thee in all my wickedness, and said, in the words of the Church prayer, 'O Lord our God, who grantest forgiveness to men through repentance. . . .' And as soon as I had finished this prayer, peace and exhilaration immediately took possession of my soul (29th June 1864).

During Passion Week the enemy hindered me just before the time of my ministerial work began by striking my heart with straitness, disturbance, and evil despondency. But I prayed with my whole heart, and with undoubting faith, to the God of my salvation, and said: 'O God, most merciful Father! Thou spakest through Thine Only-begotten Son, Our Lord Christ, saying, Ask, and it shall be given you, and so on. Give me now Thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may be strengthened for the work of this week among Thy people.' And what happened? I went through the

work of the week exceedingly well. I was calm, kind, edifying, and did not experience any oppression or uneasy hurry. I glorify the merciful right hand of my most gracious Heavenly Father. The longer I live and work the work of God, the more I see that it is ever necessary to strengthen ourselves before every spiritual work by heartfelt prayer.

ON DELIBERATION IN PRAYER

During prayer it is absolutely necessary that your heart should sincerely desire that which you ask for: that you should feel deeply and truly what you are saying. Pray slowly till an echo comes back into your heart from every word of your prayers. Yes. It is an absolute rule. Pray slowly, and with power on every word. Pronounce each successive word from the heart. Keep to the rule that it is better to say five words from the bottom of your heart, than ten thousand words from your tongue only. When your heart is cold, stop praying, and warm your heart by vividly representing to yourself your misery and your blindness and your deadness; and then go on

to pray slowly and fervently. The Lord will not forsake those who labour for Him, and who stand long before Him. With what measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. He will reward them amply for all their pain and toil by sending a light, and a warmth, and a peace, and a joy into their hearts that the common run of men never taste. It is better to pray long and continually, no doubt, but all men cannot receive that saying. And it is better for those who are not yet capable of a whole life of prayer to offer short prayers, but always with an understanding and a fervent spirit. Let every praying man accustom himself to ask himself—Am I in real need of that for which I am on my knees? And do I, as I shall answer at the great Day of Judgment, really, and from my heart, desire it? Do I really wish it? and am I ready to rise off my knees and work out that amendment of life and that holiness of heart which are now on my lips?

ON ASSIDUITY IN PRAYER

Do not spare yourself, even if you have been toiling hard all day. Having put your hand

to the plough, do not look back. God will not suffer in you duplicity, and easiness, and oversight, and self-pity. If you hurry over your prayers in order to give rest to your body, you will lose both bodily and spiritual rest. Oh! by what labour, and sweat, and tears is the approach to God ofttimes made and held fast! This is experience! The only means by which you can spend the day in holiness, and peace, and without sin, is the most sincere and fervent prayer as soon as you rise from sleep in the morning. Such prayer, and such prayer alone, will bring Christ into your heart, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And their presence alone can fortify you against all evil, and guard and keep your heart. Why is long-continued prayer so necessary? In order that we may warm our cold hearts, and soften our hard hearts. Be sure of this, in spite of all sophistry, that time and labour are needed to soften and warm the heart. The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Our Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask them. But we do not know: and never will know but by much prayer.

This is experience, as all men of prayer will testify.

ON BELIEVING PRAYER

When you pray that your sins may be forgiven, strengthen your heart in faith, and put an absolute trust in His mercy. What are all your sins to God's mercy, whatever they may be, if only you truly repent of them? But it often happens that a man does not in his heart believe that he will be forgiven: counting himself outside of God's mercy. That man, in that mind, will never obtain forgiveness, even should he shed oceans of desponding tears. But always with a straitened and a burdened heart he will depart from the mercy seat, which is only what he deserves. 'Believe that ye receive, and ye shall receive.' Not to believe; not to be sure of receiving what you ask, and what God has promised, is a blasphemy against God.

ON IMMEDIATE FORGIVENESS

The Lord sometimes hears us instantaneously and unexpectedly. Often during the day I

have been a great sinner, and at night, after prayer, I have gone to rest whiter than snow and with the deepest peace and joy in my heart. Let that be my experience at the evening of my whole life! O save, save, save me, O Lord! O receive me in that same way into thy heavenly kingdom! Everything is possible to thee. And thou delightest in mercy.

Do not fear or forget to confess every night the sins into which you have fallen during the past day. A few moments of fervent repentance, and you will be cleansed by the Holy Ghost from every impurity. You will be whiter than snow. You will be covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and united to Him, and to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost.

After sin immediately say in your heart the Psalm, 'Have mercy upon me, O God,' and say the whole Psalm in and from your heart. If it does not take effect the first time, try again: only say it the second time more heartily, more feelingly, and then salvation will speedily shine into your soul. Be always con-

trite, and more and more contrite, the more you sin: this is the proved and experienced remedy against sin. If still you do not obtain relief, blame only yourself. It proves that you have prayed without contrition, without humility, and without a strong enough desire to obtain forgiveness. It shows that you do not see and feel your sin aright.

When you sin for the fiftieth and hundredth time in the day, and are seized with the most devilish despondency, say, from the depths of your soul with Metaphrastes: 'I know well, O Lord, that mine iniquities have gone over my head. But I also know that without measure is the multitude of Thy mercies, and that there is no sin that can overcome Thy loving-kindness. Therefore, O most wonderful Being, O Lord most good, do Thou show Thy mercy to me a sinner. Accept me as Thou didst accept the prodigal, the thief, and the sinful woman. Accept me, though in word and in deed, by my evil passions and brutish lusts, I have sinned without measure against Thee. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for though I am weak and evil I am still Thy creature. O

Lord, my God, I have put my trust in Thee. Be Thou my Saviour, and loosen, and remit, and forgive all my sins; and turn, and preserve, and deliver my soul, save me for Thy mercy's sake. Where sin hath abounded, there let grace much more abound. For Thou art the God of the penitent and the Saviour of the sinner.' A hundred times a day.

ON THE CROSS

Look upon our Saviour's Cross, and contemplate Love crucified upon it for our salvation. And think from what torments He has delivered us, and to what blessedness He has saved us! He has snatched us from the jaws of death and hell, and has brought us to the Father! O love! O redemption! O indescribable blessedness!

After our Saviour's sufferings the Cross became the sign of the Son of Man: that is, the Cross now signifies our Lord Himself, incarnate, and suffering for our salvation. On the Cross our Lord offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, and by it He has saved us

from the enemy: and therefore, we can never see even the sign and shape of a cross without thinking of Him, and doing Him reverence.

Why did the Holy Cross appear in the heavens to the Emperor Constantine? Surely in order to show him that our Lord Himself, and all His apostles and martyrs, entered into glory through the Cross: that the Cross is invincible victory; that all the enemies of Christ and His people will be vanquished through the Cross, and that all the oppressed and persecuted are under the protection of Christ and His Cross. And we also experience the effect of the invincible, incomprehensible, divine power of our Lord's glorious and life-giving Cross, and by its power we drive away from our hearts all evil passions, all despondency, all fear, and all the other snares of the devil. I say this sincerely, with full belief in the truth and power of these words.

ON THE CURE OF THE PASSIONS

Crucify them. Never indulge them. When you feel hatred to your neighbour: never utter

it: never indulge it: never allow or entertain it. But set yourself to love him, and to say and do loving things to him. And, above all, pray for him. If you are of an envious heart, say and do benevolent things to the man you envy. When you feel pride, dash yourself and it to the ground. Tormented with malice and ill-will, follow after peace and love. The whole art of curing the diseases of the mind and the heart is by doing violence to them whenever they show themselves, and never, never indulging them.

ON INVOLUNTARY SIN

The sin to which we do not consent is not imputed to us. As, for example, involuntary distraction during prayer: impure and blasphemous thoughts: involuntary malice: involuntary envy: involuntary anger and ill-will. Our duty is to endure involuntary sin, which is our greatest cross, and to humble ourselves, and to be patient, and to pray without ceasing: Create in me a clean heart, O God!

ON THE TRUE SCIENCE

The science of sciences is to know our passions, and to know how to conquer and expel them. It is great science not to be angry with any one, or with anything: not to think evil of any one: not even if he has done us evil: but to find an excuse for him in ourselves, or in something else: it is great science to despise gain, and praise, and luxury: and to live temperately and moderately in all things. And so on through all the passions and affections of the heart. Alas! we have studied many arts and sciences: but not yet our own hearts, and how to keep them. Life is a great experimental science. Nothing is more difficult than to pass through this science; this narrow way; these strait gates. And those who have not learned either of their mother or of their schoolmaster to have the faith and the fear of God, they will find themselves unprepared to face life. Often he who is dux at school, and wrangler at college, is overthrown and outrun every day in the race and wrestling-ground of life. He

is like a ship put out to sea without anchor, sails, or rigging.

ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

In educating children, we should attend first and last and always to the heart. For their heart is their life. But it is their life corrupted already with sin at its source. And society is corrupted precisely at its source through the want of Christian education. Neglect of the development, of the softening, of the radical amendment of the heart, is a thousand times more culpable in a parent or a teacher than neglect of mental education. For a mentally uneducated man deserves and receives our indulgence and our pity. But in how much worse an estate is he who, while full of a so-called education, is still more full of malice, and pride, and scorn, and envy, and gluttony, and covetousness, and all his other wicked passions ! The uneducated and plain man's simplicity, meekness, gentleness, humility, silence, and patience, —how much better are they than all our knowledge of letters and sciences, all our

outward polish, all our feigned courtesy and studied expressions! Even sins themselves, being done in ignorance, are more excusable in the uneducated.

Parents and teachers! beware and be most careful not to let your children be wilful. Wilfulness is the root of bitterness in a young heart. It is the rust of the heart, the moth of love, the seed of much evil.

Look! are the pupils of our schools taught that which concerns them more than all else —prayer? Lord, said the disciple, teach us to pray.

ON OUR HOME-LIFE

Watch yourselves—your passions especially —in your home-life, where they appear most freely, like creatures of darkness in a safe place. Do not give way to vexation or irritability, else you will be mastered by it, and will fill your home with it. Our innumerable imperfections fill our home-life with endless occasions for vexation and irritation; and then, yielding to them, our home-life is soon

killed dead. Our irritations and our outbursts only make matters worse. Be calm: you are not married to an angel. We all sin before we are aware; and we are all more obnoxious to one another than we know. Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity never faileth. Conquer everything by charity.

In all caprices, all offences, all manner of family unpleasantnesses, always sincerely blame yourself. Acknowledge yourself as the real cause of the unpleasantness. Say, 'It was all my fault'; and the house will be healed, and your first love and honour will return. Know nothing at home but more love.

ON EATING AND DRINKING

Avoid and escape a life of eating, and drinking, and dressing, and sleeping, and walking; and then again, eating, and drinking, and sleeping. Health and the belly are our two gods in this age, and I am a man of the age myself, and a great sinner in all these respects. To walk and drive for health, and to incite the appetite, such are the objects and

aims of every day with many of us. Many of us—and I myself the first,—if we do not repent and alter our life, will be condemned for living like the beasts that have nothing but their bellies to live for. Tea and coffee and tobacco, even, pertain to drunkenness if indulged in for their own sakes, and unseasonably and in excess. Some men eat and drink and smoke continually. This is their diary; this is their whole life. Such a life is the death of the soul; and at a tremendous cost and cross to himself such a sensualist and glutton will ever be saved; he will know what it is to take up his cross daily when he begins to be a man of mind and heart; a man of God, and not of his bed and his belly.

When hungry, do not throw yourself upon your food. Eat slowly, and with sweet reflection on the goodness of God. Eat all the time the incorruptible food, rejoicing in Him who is the Bread of Life.

ON MAKING EVERY DAY SACRAMENTAL

On rising from your bed, say: In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I

the mind of Christ. If you let yourself out of hand; if you are excited, and hot, and agitated inwardly, you will be vanquished of yourself, and will lose the inward battle that was almost won. Be always calm, serene, simple, unsuspicious, and kind-hearted, and you will have a double victory, first over yourself, and then over your enemy.

We must carefully watch our own hearts every day, lest the tares of death—self-indulgence, unbelief, envy, hatred, and what not of all that kind—spring up to trouble us. We must daily descend into our own heart to weed it. Besides this, we must by every means known to us fertilise it by prayer, and meditation, and reading, and holy imaginations, and never let our heart out of our sight. We must remember that labour, and even toil, ay, and even daily violence, are all needed to the great task of subduing, and keeping subdued and obedient, the heart. It is through much inward tribulation that we shall carry our hearts home to heaven.

Bring your heart to God in a morning and evening sacrifice. Give up your heart wholly

to God. You do not know the blessedness and enjoyment of that; nor the misery of denying it. Renounce yourself absolutely; and especially all your sinful inclinations. Malice, hatred, pride, self-will, envy, ill-will, avarice, covetousness, gluttony, uncleanness, deceitfulness, slothfulness,—what a heart! what a hell is every human heart! And continually force yourself to be kind when others exasperate you; to ask for them, and for yourself toward them, meekness, humility, gentleness, benevolence, generosity, disinterestedness, abstinence, chastity, truth of all kinds, and righteousness. It is difficult to conquer the passions: impossible. It is to die. It is death and burial, and you alive all the time. But it can be done. By constant watchfulness, and self-observation, and prayer, you and God in and with you will do it. But not in a day; not in a year. But at last your heart will be a copy of Christ's heart, and all your passions at the service of God, as all His Son's passions, and appetites, and affections were.

You say, 'What shall I do with such a heart as mine is? For it sets itself in constant

opposition to everything that is true and good. It is full of unbelief. It is without God. It fails me in the hour of trial. It fears when it should be bold; and it is bold when it should tremble. What am I to do?' Hate it. Kill it. Take it to the Cross. Away with it! crucify it, crucify it! And after it is crucified, and dead and buried, it will be raised again, a glorious heart; the copy, and the equal, and the fellow of Christ's heart, for holiness, and beauty, and sweetness, and peace. You will then know, and not till then, what a divine gift the image of God is, and what a splendid possession to all eternity a holy heart is. That is what you are to do with your heart. And then you will say: Who is a God like unto Thee? O the depth of God! And above all, in the heart of man!

ON THE GOLDEN RULE

Love every man as yourself; that is, do not wish him anything that you would not wish for yourself; think about him, and feel toward him as you would think and feel about and toward yourself; do not wish to see anything

in his life or in his lot that you would not have in your own; do not keep in your memory any word or deed he has done against you, just as you would like all your own evil words and works to be forgotten; believe others to be as good, and far better, both in their deeds and in their intentions toward you, than you are toward them; and then you will soon see what will come out of that golden rule into your heart and life. What peace! what absolute blessedness! You will be this day with Christ in Paradise. You will taste heaven upon earth. The kingdom of God is within you. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

ON THE PULPIT

Our old man is constantly present with us, tempting us, snaring us, corrupting us, destroying us. This is why we occupy ourselves in the pulpit with the old man and his works. It is in order that both we and our people may learn every new Lord's Day to know ourselves and the dangers of our passions. And

it is that they and we together, and by the grace and strength of God, may slay the old man within us. This is why we do not take up our time and thoughts in the pulpit with any of the things of this world. They do not concern us. They are irrelevant and impertinent to us. There is one thing needful to us there till it is accomplished. Thus we labour in and for the pulpit that our people may be taught to know God in Christ, and to love Him with all their hearts, and their neighbours as themselves. This is an old text, but it is every day new and needful as ever, and more than ever.

And, then, a preacher, as a physician of souls, ought himself to be above his own passions in order to have his hand in the cure of his people. He ought to be skilful and mighty in prayer and in all kinds of self-denial. He ought to be above all worldly desires and delights. He ought to be, he must be, above self-love, and pride, and ambition. That is to say, he must be deep in the Divine Physician's hands, and under His regimen for all these things himself, if he would work to-

gether with Christ in the hearts of his people. If he is to enlighten others he must be enlightened himself. If he is to preserve his people from spiritual and moral corruption, he must have in himself the true spiritual salt. Physician, heal thyself first, and then I will listen to thee about my sicknesses and my salvation. This also is experience.

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